

For this album of American music, ABQ has invited the esteemed music historian, Michael Grace, to provide liner notes. Dr. Grace is a professor at Colorado College and writes program notes for the Colorado College Summer Music Festival. An expert on music and art from many periods, his course topics include Renaissance culture, American music, and 20th Century music.

A 'modern day master' and often the 'highlight of the program' (*The New York Times*), **Robert Paterson's** music is praised for its elegance, wit, structural integrity, and a wonderful sense of color. Paterson was named *The Composer of The Year* by the Classical Recording Foundation with a performance and celebration at Carnegie's Weill Hall in 2011. His music has been on the Grammy® ballot yearly, and his works were named 'Best Music of 2012' on National Public Radio. His works have been played by the Louisville Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Vermont Symphony, BargeMusic, the Albany Symphony Dogs of Desire, among others. Paterson's choral works were recorded by Musica Sacra and Maestro Kent Tritle, with a world premiere performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.

Notable awards include the Utah Arts Festival Award, the Copland Award, ASCAP Young Composer Awards, a three year *Music Alive!* grant from the League of American Orchestras and New Music USA, and yearly ASCAP awards. Fellowships include Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Aspen Music Festival.

Paterson holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music (BM), Indiana University (MM), and Cornell University (DMA). He regularly gives master classes at colleges and universities, including the Curtis Institute of Music, New York University, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Paterson is the Artistic Director of the American Modern Ensemble and resides in NYC.

Shine was commissioned by The American Brass Quintet and Rick Teller. Paterson has provided the following notes on the composition:

“My father is a sculptor who worked with bronze, so as a child, I was always hanging around the foundry at the school where he taught, watching him cast bronze sculptures by pouring crucibles of molten metal into giant molds. In many ways, this is probably what caused me to have an affinity for brass instruments and metallic percussion instruments such as bells. There's just something about metal, and the sounds metal instruments make, that I find very captivating.

“*Shine* is in four movements and explores colorful aspects of four different types of metal: brass, gold, mercury and steel. The first movement, Ringing Brass Bells, is bell-like from beginning to end, with brief episodes of repeated note flourishes, creating a sort of brief fanfare. The title of this movement is also a double entendre, referring to the bells of the brass instruments. The second movement, Quicksilver, is scherzo-like and fast. In this movement, I explore colorful, metallic sonorities using a variety of mutes and fast trills, and the movement gradually rises in tessitura from beginning to end like mercury rising in a thermometer. The third movement, Veins of Gold, is a slow movement that begins and ends softly, and focuses on the melodic capabilities of each instrument, almost like a mini concerto for brass quintet. The last movement, Bright Blue Steel, is powerful

and fast from beginning to end, and contains runs that emulate something moving at a very fast speed. The term 'blue steel' refers to the color steel blue, and also refers to a tempering process in metallurgy used to reduce brittleness and increase toughness in objects made of steel."

Paterson's notes give the listener a glimpse of how he felt about each movement. The first one, *Ringling Brass Bells*, opens with an inviting and rhythmically jaunty subject treated imitatively by the two trumpets, answered by a more chordal, but still syncopated, theme in the other three instruments. These two ideas appear to underlie much of the music of the movement. But the "bell-like" sounds emerge from time to time in varying guises. First there are the "repeated note flourishes" and then later, marked "Bells II" in the score, rising arpeggios with one note from each instrument reminding the listener of real bell sounds. The variety in this colorful movement is intriguing.

The second movement, "Quicksilver" (an alternate name for mercury), is, as Paterson describes, a showcase for a variety of "colorful, metallic sonorities." It is simply dazzling how many colors he achieves through mutes, occasionally used in unconventional ways. In just the 4th measure the trumpets are asked to use Harmon mutes (in jazz known as the "wah wah" mute) "stems out," a la Miles Davis. Against slow notes in the bass trombone, the eerie metallic sound of their dialogue in fast notes is a brilliant study of timbral variety within the brass instrument family. The rest of the movement continues to explore these colors while the instruments play in higher and higher parts of their range. Toward the end, Paterson even notes in the score, just for the performers to see, "Temperature Rising."

The third movement, "Veins of Gold," is the slow movement. A soft languid mood is created by the rich harmonies in groups of two or three instruments while a little melodic motive made up of rising and descending arpeggios is passed among all the instruments, one at a time. These might be felt as geological "veins of gold" crisscrossing each other in a complex web. The movement ends very quietly with the two trumpets alternating on a fast passage, again with the Harmon mute.

The final movement, "Bright Blue Steel," sounds like the title suggests. At the outset, the quintessentially "bright" sound of the trumpets flourishes above harmonies provided by the lower instruments. But soon all the instruments participate in the "powerful and fast" movement described by Paterson in his notes. A great variety of textures, including some that are rhythmically syncopated and some that have very fast repeated notes, ensues as the movement moves inexorably toward the climactic and exciting final cadence.

As noted in the program for the premiere performance of this Brass Quintet, "The young and gifted **Jay Greenberg** has already created a significant catalogue of solo, chamber, and orchestral literature that examines and builds upon classical forms. The youngest composer ever to have an

exclusive agreement with Schirmer/AMP, Greenberg's other notable first achievements included exclusive contracts with Sony Classical and with IMG Artists.” And while these achievements reflect a superb peer review of his work, his appearance on *60 Minutes* when he was 13 made him and his work widely known to a national TV audience.

As his IMG Artists biography notes, Jay Greenberg has had a prodigious career to date. “Born in 1991 in New Haven, Connecticut, American composer Jay Greenberg began playing the cello at three, and subsequently taught himself to play the piano. His first formal lessons in theory and composition with Antony John at Duke University began at seven; three years later he enrolled as a scholarship student in a special program at New York’s Juilliard School of Music that involved courses at both the pre-undergrad and undergraduate levels, including composition classes with Samuel Adler, music theory with Samuel Zyman and Kendall Briggs, and multiple courses in ear training and piano. Later, during the 2006-07 academic year, Greenberg took composition classes at the Yale School of Music as part of a high school independent study program.”

Greenberg’s modesty shows through in his comments on this Brass Quintet.

“The Quintet for Brass was completed on 29 February 2012 in response to being awarded a commission from the American Brass Quintet Emerging Composer Commissioning Program, funded by the Jerome Foundation. It is approximately 14 minutes in duration.

“The work went through several versions before reaching its final form. A short first draft was discarded, whereas a second version was too difficult to play and unidiomatically composed for the instruments. Fortunately the members of the American Brass Quintet were able to provide invaluable feedback and technical assistance, for which I am quite grateful. As so often happens when I attempt to "revise" a piece, the final version ended up being an entirely new piece unrelated to the earlier drafts.”

This final version is a stunning work and shows that the young composer took his brass musician mentors seriously and listened closely to their advice. The work is a phenomenal display of special techniques like sliding glissandos, high muted chirping in the trumpets, and lyrical, long-breathed, melodies in the horn. These effects are particularly notable in the extended denouement with which the work closes; all the instruments, save the horn, play very fast chirp-like bits, very quietly and with mutes, while the horn slowly brings a languorous melody to a close.

Structurally, the work moves through a series sections marked by changing textures. After an opening for a trumpet solo, accompanied by little melodic snippets in the other instruments, there are passages in which all the instruments play harmoniously together, or in contrasting groups of two or three. There are moments that are very quiet and some that are loud, fast and virtuosic for each instrument. Greenberg understands the idiomatic nature of each instrument, and writes music that seems well suited. This is especially notable in the extended solos offered to each, beginning with the first trumpet in the opening measures of the composition. There are also some extended duets for like instruments, such as the trumpets and

the trombones. The latter are especially characteristic with their glissandos.

This composition has many fresh and innovative ideas. It will never be played by the amateur or faint-of-heart brass quintet, for it is indeed hard. But it is a refreshing addition to the repertoire for those who are up to its challenges, such as the great American Brass Quintet!

Sebastian Currier has had a stellar career as a composer. Raised in Providence, Rhode Island, he studied at The Juilliard School and the Manhattan School of Music. As his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, states: “recipient of the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 2007, Sebastian Currier represents the finest in American composition. He has received many other awards including the Berlin Prize, Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Currier's music has been enthusiastically embraced by violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, who commissioned and premiered his violin and piano piece, *Aftersong*, and his violin concerto, *Time Machines*. Members of the Berlin Philharmonic dedicated a full evening to Currier's extensive chamber music output in October 2005, including the premieres of *Remix* for mixed ensemble and *Crossfade* for two harps.” Other celebrated orchestras and performers who have performed his work include the New York Philharmonic and the Kronos Quartet.

His music has been praised effusively by critics. The New York Times heralded his work as "music with a distinctive voice." The Washington Post described it as "lyrical, colorful, firmly rooted in tradition, but absolutely new." And in a review of his *Aftersong* when performed in London by Anne-Sophie Mutter, a critic from the London Times said, "If all his pieces are as emotionally charged and ingenious in their use of rethought tonality as this, give me more."

His numerous recordings have been released by Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos and others, and have received rave reviews. He has received many prestigious awards including the Berlin Prize, Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and has held residencies at the MacDowell and Yaddo colonies. He received a DMA from the Juilliard School and from 1999-2007 taught at Columbia University. He was Artist in Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey from 2013-16.

Cadence, Fugue, Fade for Brass Quintet was commissioned by Juilliard for the American Brass Quintet. It had its world premiere by ABQ in 2013 at Juilliard's Paul Hall in New York. The composer has offered the following notes:

“When I started to think about writing a brass quintet, the first sound that came to mind was that of brass music of the late Renaissance and early Baroque, with its rich, full-bodied sound, weaving between polyphonic and chordal textures. One of the most important instrumental forms of the time was the canzona. The canzona is generally seen as an important forerunner of the sonata as well as a significant antecedent to the fugue. It's a sectional form that changes character, mood, tempo, and texture. In *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* I wished to conjure, albeit in an indirect way, some of the aspects both of

the sound and formal delineations of this wonderful chapter in music. Like a canzona, the piece is one continuous flow of sound, but divided into various sections of contrasting characters. The title refers to the three predominant types of material. The piece opens with a cadence, which is of course normally associated with a sign of closure, either of phrase or section. The Cadence, which begins in a way not unlike a cadential pattern one might encounter in the late Renaissance, quickly subverts this pattern, ending the phrase not with a feeling of conclusion, but with one of open-endedness. The Fugue is the centerpiece of the work. Repeated-note chords, which pass material between the instruments in a hoquet-like fashion, form Fade, which brings the work to a close as it slowly fades away to nothing.”

Currier’s sound is indeed reminiscent of golden years of brass music around 1600, but with many striking modernisms. As the composer notes, it seems to begin with lots of cadences which normally end a composition; such cadences usually involve the resolution of dissonances. And one hears striking dissonances finding the most suave and gratifying resolutions. Some passages are extended, such as the strong rhythms and faster tempos which characterize the main section of “Cadence.” “Fugue” is an exuberant version of this very old form. It begins with the main fugue subject, in fairly slow notes, in the trumpet. But immediately the horn enters with a countersubject in faster triplets. These two subjects are passed around between all the five instruments in remarkably intense counterpoint. This is a real highlight. Finally, “Fade” begins with quieter chords in quintuplets (five beats in the place of four). But there are more climaxes, including a passage of long slow chords that crescendo to chilling dissonances before the beautiful final denouement, the ultimate fade into nothingness. Here the quintuplet chords, with the instruments muted, descend to *pianississimo* followed by “*morendo*” or “dying.” This is a very dramatic piece with great substance. It shows homage to the Western Music tradition in a most profound but also pleasing way.

Born in Cleveland, **Eric Ewazen** studied first at the Eastman School of Music where he received a BM, and then went on to the Juilliard School where he received both his MM and DMA. His teachers have included Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner and Gunther Schuller. He has been on the Juilliard faculty since 1980. He has also been a lecturer for the New York Philharmonic’s Music Encounters Series, Vice President of the League of Composers - International Society for Contemporary Music, served on the faculties of the Hebrew Arts School and the Lincoln Center Institute, and was composer-in-residence for the for the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

Ewazen’s music has been performed throughout the world. His orchestral music has been played by leading ensembles in the U.S., Mexico, Brazil, France, Spain, England, Finland, Turkey, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China. His chamber music has been heard at festivals including Woodstock, Tanglewood, Aspen, Caramoor, Tidewater, Music Academy of the West, and at Colorado College Summer Music Festival, among others. His works are recorded on EMI Classics, Summit Records, d'Note Records, CRS Records, New World, Clique Track, Helicon, Hyperion, and Cala. Two of his solo CDs featuring his brass chamber music are available on

Well-Tempered Productions. A solo CD featuring his percussion music is available on Resonator Records. Three solo CDs of his orchestral music, his music for string orchestra, and his music for bass trombone are available on Albany Records.

Eric Ewazen titled his piece *Canticum Honoris Amicorum for The American Brass Quintet (Past, Present and Future!)*. The meaning of this title is curious. The work is scored for 3 trumpets, 2 French horns, 2 Trombones and 2 Bass Trombones/Tuba. In effect, he wrote a work designed for 9 players that make up a traditional brass quintet plus an extra player on each instrument. The idea is that new players can play with the old group, or a retired player can play with the new group. This is a very clever thought that seems both practical, but also novel; there is not much music (if any) for this combination of instruments.

In Ewazen's words:

“Canticum honoris amicorum, a Nonet for Brass, marks an unprecedented transition in the extraordinary career of the American Brass Quintet. ABQ has long been at the forefront of American musical life, showcasing the beauty, grandeur, and virtuosic possibilities of brass chamber music and adding hundreds of new compositions by major composers to the repertoire. They have been a beloved musical ensemble to countless numbers of their students, colleagues, and audiences around the world. To me, they have truly been musical friends, and this piece is offered in honor of their friendship. The Nonet is written as trumpeter Raymond Mase and hornist David Wakefield simultaneously retire from ABQ, and Louis Hanzlik and Eric Reed become the newest members of the ensemble. The work honors Ray and Dave's sublime performances and their dedication to their art.

“Canticum honoris amicorum (the Latin title translates as “a song honoring friends”) also reflects the ABQ's great dedication to the works of such Italian masters as Gabrieli, Monteverdi, and the composers of the English Renaissance; hence the madrigal-influenced approach in the piece. The work showcases ABQ's impeccable playing, alternating contrapuntal virtuosity and heroic chorales singing the praises of our dear older friends, Ray and Dave and the new friends who will continue ABQ's tradition of great music, great brass playing, and great musical influence for decades to come.”

Ewazen makes most effective use of this large ensemble. First, he has enough instruments that he can create a great variety of textures. It may remind some listeners of the great brass works from the early 17th Century by the Gabrielis at San Marco Basilica in Venice. Sometimes referred to as *cori spezzati* (spaced out choirs), they would have choirs of brass (usually with woodwinds and strings) spread out in the church so that they seemed to dialogue with one another. Ewazen here creates smaller ensembles, sometimes high ones (perhaps the three trumpets and one horn) and low ones (perhaps one horn, trombones and bass trombone/tuba) and have them in dialogue. Often, they will have contrasting styles of music. For example, the texture which opens the work, and which is heard again toward the end, consists of three trumpets playing fast sixteenth-note runs passed among the three players while the all the lower instruments play crisp staccato chords in syncopated rhythms. Later the horns get the fast

sixteenth-note runs while the lower instruments get rich harmonies and the trumpets share snippets of melody. The variety of these textural juxtapositions is terrific, and great fun to hear.

Ewazen has established a great reputation as a composer for brass. And hearing this work makes one realize why. He has a unique ability to write idiomatically for each of the instruments. In their newsletter from December, 2014, the ABQ noted that “The piece is typical Ewazen in the joy and energy it conveys. Fanfares, beautiful melodies, great sonority and a dazzling finish brought the concert to a wonderful conclusion.”